

# Wycombe Wanderers 0, Wealdstone 1

## WEALDSTONE'S teenage protege, Colin Franks, knifed towards the Hospital end in the 78th minute at Loakes Park on Saturday to sever the last realistic life-line between Wycombe and their bid for this season's Isthmian League crown.

Dreams of usurping Enfield from their champions' throne faded almost into oblivion as the 17-years-old left-half eluded John Maskell's forlorn challenge and lashed out with the winning shot.

As opposed to much of the first half, Wanderers had been applying long periods of pressure.

With 12 minutes, plus an extended injury time, to retrieve the situation, they thrust forward once more. But by now Wealdstone were accustomed to their self-adopted role in a tactical, sometimes crude, defensive retreat, and doggedly refused to yield.

That the visitors held out could be attributed to a number of factors, not the least of which was Wanderers' weakness in the 18-yard box; why they should, seemingly out of choice, manoeuvre themselves into such a negative position, remains an unanswered mystery.

For on the run of play before the interval Wealdstone, donned conspicuously in all-yellow strip to avoid a clash of

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"blue", were the more subtle, and for the opening 25 minutes or so, the more active offenders.

Strange therefore, they should reverse their policy by pulling the "hustlers" that had wielded such menace, away from Wycombe's unnerved but solid defence line.

Even more unfortunate was the series of spoiling fouls used by the visitors to upset the basis of a game which, if never a masterpiece, found quality in its action content.

As an Amateur Cup rehearsal, it was not all it might have been for Wycombe. A cold forged Tony Horseman to the substitutes' bench, thus relieving, at least, manager Barry Darvill from the duty of deciding upon whom to name as number twelve.

What might have happened had Horseman been on hand to burn his brand on Wycombe's assault, is a matter for pure speculation. However with crosses streaming off the right wing from prominent Len Worley, the wastage of "goal" possibilities almost reached a criminal degree.

Keith Samuels adequately withstood the rigours of his delayed comeback test. Yet, understandably, he rarely looked to be a likely source of goals, and the attack continued to scratch around.

Playing more than usual to the responsive Worley, Wanderers' frontrunners scored much of his good work, which in its way was vital to the home cause.

Vince Faulkner — the intended "battering ram" of Darvill's planning — again failed to chart a course through the type of packed-defensive barrier, widespread in all standards of modern-day football.

He made no visible impression whatsoever on the forthright goalkeeping of Andy Williams, whose duels were confined in the main to individual skirmishes with Les Merrick — a likelier threat.

In search of an International cap, Williams displayed unhesitant touches, rising to parry the high, testing ball time and again. After 27 minutes a Merrick-Williams bout roused the Loakes Park crowd when the ball volleyed back and forth at cross-bar level before the former's third attempt scraped close to the side netting.

Following their earlier drive, Wealdstone fell back trapped in their own territory and on three occasions in the six minutes prior to half-time, Worley prompted Williams into immediate action to outjump the Wycombe strikers.

But, following the resumption, even Williams breathed a long sigh of relief as a Merrick power-header curled perilously close over the bar in the 58th minute.

Franks lifted the shutters three minutes later transferring the ball over Wycombe's line from Hutchinson. But offside had been called seconds before and it was not until he had excitedly fallen over his own feet when Maskell's goal stood open-netted at his mercy in the 66th minute, that the youngster hit lucky third time round.

## MATCH DETAILS

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; L. Temel, C. Gale; J. Lailey, I. Rundle, D. Thomas; L. Worley, B. Baker, V. Faulkner, K. Samuels, L. Merrick. Sub.: A. Horseman (did not play).

Wealdstone: A. Williams; M. Doyle, D. Leonard; D. Bromley, A. McGuinness, C. Franks; R. Bremer, C. Townsend, D. Swain, D. Montague, J. Hutchinson. Sub.: H. Lindsay (did not play).

Half-time: 0-0.

Goalscorer: Wealdstone—C. Franks (78).

Referee: Mr. K. W. Sutcliffe (Rainham).